

Christian fugitives that they gave them shelter. Athanasius, too, declares that he often heard survivors of the persecution say that many pagans risked the loss of their goods and the chance of imprisonment in order to hide Christians from the officers of the law. There is no question of exaggeration. The most horrible tortures were invented ; the most barbarous and degrading punishments were devised. The victim who was simply ordered to be decapitated or drowned was highly favoured. In a very large number of cases death was delayed as long as possible. The sufferer, after being tortured on the rack, or having eyes or tongue torn out, or foot or hand struck off, was taken back to prison to recover for a second examination.

Even when the victim was dead the law frequently pursued the corpse with its futile vengeance. It was no uncommon thing for a body to be thrown to the dogs, or to be chopped into fragments and cast into the sea, or to be burnt and the ashes flung upon running water. He was counted a merciful judge who allowed the friends of the martyr to bear away the body to decent burial and lay it in the grave. At Augsburg, when the magistrate heard that the mother and three servants of a converted courtesan, named Afra, had placed her body in a tomb, he ordered all four to be enclosed in one grave with the corpse and burnt alive.

It is, of course, quite impossible to compute the number of the victims, but it was unquestionably very large. We do not, perhaps, hear of as many bishops and priests being put to death as might